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CHINA:

ITS POPULATION — TRADE — AND THE PROSPECT OF A TREATY.*

I. POPULATION.

IN the successive explorations of modern times, there has been no portion of the globe accessible by sea, which has defied curiosity more successfully, and been more worthy of investigation, than the Empire of China. Its vast resources, its mighty population, its "tame and immovable" civilization, and its pretensions to universal supremacy, have but enhanced the interest of its mysterious isolation from other nations. Within the last few years, the terrible war of which it became the victim, and the consequent opening of its ports to a general traffic, have made it the subject of general attention. If we add to these sources of interest the reasons that have made China a problem of the deepest significance to the learned world from the time of Marco Polo, the peculiarity of her language, the extent of her literature, the research of her philosophy, the antiquity of her history, and the light thrown upon the early ages of Asia by her annals, enough is adduced to prove the importance of accurate information upon the character of the Chinese population, the resources of the empire, and the probable nature of its future intercourse with foreign nations.

The documents translated by M. Pauthier, and the pamphlet by Mr. Forbes, contain much that is necessary to our purpose upon the statistics of China in reference to the amount of population, the nature of the existing trade, her ability to

* 1. Documents Statistiques Officiels sur l'Empire de la Chine, traduits du Chinois, par G. Pauthier. Paris. 1841.

2. Remarks on China, and the China Trade. By R. B. Forbes. Boston. 1844.

3. Documents Officiels Chinois sur les Ambassades Etrangères envoyées près de l'Empereur de la Chine, traduits du Chinois, par G. Pauthier. Extrait de la Revue l'Orient. Paris. 1843.

consume foreign manufactures, and her disposition to a more equal and reasonable reception of foreigners. The question of population and resources is a deeply important one to the United States, as it involves ability to consume, and to pay, for our manufactures. These two points being settled, it will then be time to consider whether our efforts to open amicable relations with the court of Pe-king will be successful. We propose to give a summary of such parts of the works before us as may throw light upon these points, and to deduce such conclusions as the premises may warrant.

In examining the "Documents Statistiques Officiels," it will be necessary to lay before our readers a summary of the principal facts therein stated, in order to give due force to the arguments for or against their credibility. They admit, at present, of no direct tangible proof, and no argument can compel conviction like a plain, undeniable fact. No foreigner has it in his power to know, from his own observation, the amount of the population; and the accounts of the natives are, therefore, the only statements that can pretend to accuracy. How far, then, are the official documents to be believed?

The original Chinese, which is the eleventh book of the great "Collection of Administrative Statutes of the reigning Dynasty of China,"* comprises the Census, the Survey of the Land, and the Apportionment of Taxes; the two first constituting the permanent foundation, upon which the last is levied. The three parts form a collection of valuable facts, which can be derived from no other source.

The Census is the first and most important. The Law and the Commentary are side by side, and we will endeavor to sum up the results, translating only such passages as prove the careful manner in which the numeration is made. After directing how the registers shall be kept, the decree proceeds to declare, that the registration shall be made by *yen hoo*, fire-places or doors, to be divided into twelve classes, (which it is not necessary to specify here,) and to be counted in the following manner: — The males, who are over sixteen years of

* *Tai-tsing-hoet-tien*; or, more correctly, *Tai-tsing hway-teen*; Kiouan ix. fol. 1-28, section *Hou-pou*, administration of Finance; Chinese *Chrestomathy*, p. 572. In the orthography of Chinese, we shall follow, as far as practicable, the system of Mr. Pickering.

age, are called *ting*, able-bodied men; the women, and all under sixteen, are named *kow*, mouths. The men and the mouths, *ting-kow*, (that is, all the population,) are directed to inscribe their names upon tablets hung upon the door of every house, so that each individual may be numbered in the census. In order to obtain the total population of each province, its governor and lieutenant governor cause these tablets to be deposited in the appointed places by the officers called *pao-kea*, chiefs of ten houses. In the tenth month of every year they are forwarded to the administration at Pe-king, and at the same time the proportion of taxes is levied. The board of finance, at the end of the year, puts together all these documents, and forms from them the imperial list of the taxes and the revenues of the empire. Every year the increase of population is examined, but, if small, no account is made of it.

Before giving the results of the census of 1812, which is embraced in the *Ta-tsing hwuy-teen*, it would be desirable to notice the numeration of 1712, contained in the same work, and taken for the assessment of a *poll-tax*. It will be observed, that this was only one hundred years before the last census, and its comparative smallness is the foundation of the great discrepancies which prevail in the estimates of foreigners, when attempting to assign reasonable limits to the extent of Chinese population. In the eighteen provinces, the registration in the year 1712, contained the names of 29,042,492 *jin-ting*, taxable males. Father Amiot, in the year 1744, by multiplying this sum by five, which he considered the average number of each family, obtained the arbitrary result of about 145,000,000. But after the abolition of the poll-tax, which entailed also military service, and after the pacification of certain turbulent provinces, the government was enabled, in due course of time, to prepare and enforce a careful and systematic registration. Taxes being levied upon landholders, they were divided by law into several classes, with great exactness, and every individual was numbered. Ten families now constitute a *pai*; ten *pai* form a *kia*; ten *kia* make a *pao*, century, and each of these divisions has its appropriate ruler, who watches over his little government, and furnishes to his superior officer annual returns of the population of his district. So that, after the regular routine, the various amounts arrive at Pe-king, and it is the

result of one of the operations of the system to which we now have arrived. The contrast between the census of 1712 and 1812 will strike every one, and we must ask a short suspension of opinion before their great discrepancy of numbers is allowed to condemn both.

The following table comprises the total population of each province, contained in the lists sent to the Board of Finance in the seventeenth year of the Emperor Kea-king, which is A. D. 1812. We give, side by side, the French and English orthography of M. Pauthier and Dr. Morrison.

PROVINCES.		
<i>French Orthography.</i>	<i>English Orthography.</i>	<i>Population.</i>
1. Tchi-li,	Chihle,	27,990,871
Fong-tien,	Fungeten,	942,003
Ki-rin,	Kirin,	307,781
2. Chan-toung,	Shantung,	28,958,764
3. Chan-si,	Shanse,	14,004,210
4. Honân,	Honan,	23,037,171
5. Kiang-sou,	Keangsoo,	37,843,501
6. Ngan-hoel,	Ganhwuy,	34,168,059
7. Kiang-si,	Keangsee,	23,046,999
8. Fo-kien,	Fuhkheen,	14,777,410
Males <i>fan</i> of Taiwan, ...	Tawan, (Formosa,)	1,748
9. Tche-kiang,	Chekiang,	26,256,784
10. Houpé,	Hoopih,	27,370,098
11. Hou-nan,	Hoonan,	18,652,507
12. Chen-si,	Shense,	10,207,256
13. Kan-sou,	Kansuh,	15,193,125
Parkol and Puroumoutsî, ..	Parkol,	161,750
14. Sse-tchouan,	Szechuen,	21,435,678
15. Kouang-toung,	Kwangtung,	19,174,030
16. Kouang-si,	Kwangse,	7,313,895
17. Yun-nân,	Yunnan,	5,561,320
18. Kouef-tcheou,	Kweichow,	5,288,219
		<u>361,693,179</u>

Besides this large sum, the population of China Proper, the census includes those provinces beyond the frontiers, dependent upon the empire, which are numbered by fire-places, or houses. It will be sufficient to give the sum, which is 193,823 houses. It will be observed, also, that in the table just given, the inhabitants of Tawan, or Formosa, are counted by *fan*, males alone, so that the enormous total falls short of the whole population of the Chinese empire, according to their own statements.

Having now seen the manner in which the census is taken, and its result, we are better prepared to enter upon an examination of its credibility. An analysis of its details, and of some of the causes which influence its apparent overstatements, may enable us to arrive at some satisfactory conclusion.

The next table, showing at a glance the population of each square mile in the different provinces, and the average for the whole empire, is derived from two sources. The amount of population in each province is the same just given from the Ta-tsing hwuy-teen, and the number of square miles and acres is taken from Sir George Staunton.

<i>Names of the eighteen Provinces.</i>	<i>Population.</i>	<i>Sq. miles in each Province.</i>	<i>English Acres.</i>	<i>Pop. on ea. sq. mile.</i>
Chihle,	27,990,871	58,949	37,727,360	496
Fungteen,	942,003			
Kirin,	307,781			
Keangsoo,	37,843,501	92,961	59,495,040	774
Ganhwuy,	34,168,059			
Keangsee,	23,046,999			
Chekiang,	26,256,784	39,150	25,056,000	670
Fuhkheen,	14,777,410	53,480	34,227,200	276
Tawan,	1,748	144,770	92,652,800	318
Hoopih,	27,370,098			
Hoonan,	18,652,507			
Honan,	23,037,171	65,104	41,666,560	353
Shantung,	28,958,764	65,104	41,666,560	444
Shanse,	14,004,210	55,268	35,371,520	251
Shense,	10,207,256	154,008	98,565,120	162
Kansuh,	15,193,125			
Parkol, &c.,	161,750			
Szechuen,	21,435,678	166,800	106,752,000	128
Kwangtung,	19,174,030	79,456	50,851,840	241
Kwangse,	7,313,895	78,250	50,080,000	93
Yunnan,	5,561,320	107,969	69,100,160	51
Kweichow,	5,288,219	64,554	41,314,560	81
	361,693,179	1,297,999*	830,719,360	277

It will be seen, that the density of the population is not so comparatively great as has been supposed. The number of inhabitants on each square mile is

In England,†	297
In Belgium,‡	343
In Lucca,§	311
In China,	277

* This sum is said to be derived from astronomical calculations. Though probably near the truth, the remarkable coincidence in extent of Honan and Shantung will hardly add to its credibility.

† Census of 1841. ‡ Black's General Atlas. Edinburgh, 1841. § Id.

The two provinces of Keangsoo and Ganhwuy exceed in density of population the others, but the average does not seem improbable, when we recollect that Lancashire has 944 and Surrey 767 inhabitants to the square mile. So that in the figures themselves, there is nothing conclusive against the truth of the official statement. The immense amount of beings included under one general name, and under one government, though sufficiently startling, must be rejected on some other account than the mere magnitude of the sum.

Although our readers may be somewhat wearied with figures, we must ask their attention to one more table before summing up our brief argument on the credibility of the Ta-tsing hwuy-teen. For further information on its details, they are referred to the work from which it is taken.*

	<i>Population.</i>	<i>A. D.</i>	<i>Authorities.</i>
1.	60,515,811	1393	Kang-keen-e-che.
2.	23,312,200	1710	Anglo-Chinese Col. Report.
3.	28,605,716	1711	Ta-tsing hwuy-teen, new edition.
4.	157,301,755	1743	Amiot.
5.	103,050,060	1753	Ta-tsing hwuy-teen, new edition.
6.	198,214,553	1762	Grosier.
7.	155,249,897	1790	Z. of Berlin.†
8.	307,467,200	1792	Anglo-Chinese Col. Report.
9.	333,000,000	1792	Sir Geo. Staunton.
10.	361,693,879	1812	Ta-tsing hwuy-teen, new edition.

These ten statements, though seemingly inconsistent, are reconcilable with one another. The first is not improbable; the second and third were taken in reference to a poll-tax and military service, and a part of the empire was disturbed by civil war. The fourth sum is arbitrary, supposing five inhabitants to each family, and is, besides, founded on number three. The fifth shows a great increase on the third, which is to be explained from the interdiction of the poll-tax about this time, and consequent removal of the principal reason for under statement. Grosier's is the first which is supposed to give a full account of all the population, and in this connection is credible. Mr. Z. of Berlin gives a purely arbi-

* Chinese Repository, vol i. p. 361.

† Published in the London Times, July 23d, 1830.

trary result. Sir George Staunton's is in round numbers, and does not pretend to accuracy. The eighth and tenth statements are not inconsistent with one another from the ordinary ratio of increase. This short summary, added to what has been said previously in relation to Father Amiot's calculation, is, we think, sufficient to show, that no argument derived from the difference of these ten sums can be entitled, at present, to set aside the official documents.

How far, then, does our actual knowledge of the country and its institutions corroborate the statements of the Ta-tsing hwuy-teen? Are there physical, social, or political reasons, acting as preventive checks, sufficient in potency to invalidate the Chinese documents?

There are three causes, which to some degree act unfavorably upon the increase of population, in some parts of the country. They are the practice of infanticide, which prevails to some extent; domestic slavery, which sometimes prevents the marriage of the person sold; and the dissolute habits of the lower classes. They are not, however, powerful enough to stem the strong tendency to increase, and are only mentioned to show how few and inefficient are the physical causes, which have yet come to light, capable of offering any impediment to the progress of population.

On the other hand, China is abundantly able to support an immense population. The advantages with which the country has been gifted by nature, have been improved to the utmost by its industrious inhabitants, in the actual state of their knowledge and social condition; agriculture, the source of food, has been honored and encouraged beyond every other pursuit; and the culture of the land, (even when divested of the exaggerations of early writers,) and the nature of its produce, are such as afford the largest return, under the circumstances, to the labor employed. It has been remarked, too, that the prevalence of agricultural over manufacturing occupations, must tend to prolong life, as well as to increase food. Excepting those of the emperor, in the vicinity of the capital, there are no extensive parks or pleasure-grounds, reserved from the operations of productive industry. In the prevailing absence of wheel carriages and horses, the least possible ground is occupied by roads; and the only tracts devoted to sepulchral purposes, are the sides of barren

hills and mountains. There is no meadow cultivation whatever; nothing is raised for the food of cattle, but all for man.* Nor is the water exempted from the same searching operation for food as the land. In no part of the world is so much sustenance derived from fisheries.

Nor is the effect of the whole political system less potent in stimulating production. The rights of a father extend over the lifetime of a son, and render male heirs not only important, but necessary. Every care is taken to prevent families from becoming extinct, and, in default of male heirs, there is a legalized mode of adoption. So far are the efforts of the government to increase population carried, that every owner of a female slave, who does not procure a husband for her, is liable to prosecution. By the same system of concentration, the property of families is made to support the greatest number practicable. Emigration, the safety-valve of over-populous countries, is forbidden by law. Early marriages prevail to an extent seemingly only possible in new countries. The whole political divisions of society are arranged on the grand patriarchal system; power is in proportion to the extent of the family, and no fear of want of sustenance has imposed preventive laws upon the people. Above all, for the past century, China has been comparatively free from the three great scourges of the human race,—war, pestilence, and famine.

It will be seen, then, that, if the statements of the Ta-tsing hwuy-teen are to be rejected, it must arise from some internal evidence of want of accuracy. But its minute attention to detail has been remarked before. Every care has been taken, in the laws, to provide for the enrolment of all the population. The document, too, is intended for their own information; no intended deception of foreigners lies at its foundation. There would seem, too, to be no adequate motive for over or under stating, as the poll-tax has long since been removed, and the numeration has no unfavorable effect in increasing individual burdens. Besides this, it may be mentioned, that, in the eighteen provinces, there are 1518 of

* History of China and its Inhabitants. By John Francis Davis. Vol. ii. p. 364. N. Y. 1840. A work of great interest, from the long, intimate, and official connection of the author with the Chinese.

† Chinese Repository, vol. i. p. 395.

the smaller divisions, — *heens*, *chows*, and *tings*, — each of which, were the population equally divided, would have about 237,000. But, as far as the Europeans have had it in their power to confirm this, in the vicinity of Canton, the average has proved to be rather under than over this amount.

In the examination of the Chinese account of the population of the empire, we have been unable to find any reason for setting it aside, from facts which have yet come to light. We have seen that the whole social, political, and physical tendencies stimulate to overproduction; that there is no evidence in the documents themselves to impugn their own credibility; and, in fine, that we must accept, for the present, the accuracy of the official documents. The same reliance must be placed upon them as upon the census of any civilized country, until some new reason exists for setting them aside.*

II. TRADE.

The pamphlet of Mr. Forbes upon China, and the China trade, is published very opportunely. It embodies, in clear, straight-forward language, some results drawn from a long experience and a thorough knowledge of the subjects upon which he treats. It is published at a time when correct information is very much needed by the mercantile community upon the state of things in China, and when the tendency to wild speculations in her markets is rapidly on the increase. Whoever has attained experience, and generously unfolds it, without the hope of reward, for the benefit of his fellow-citizens, is a public benefactor. Mr. Forbes has performed one of these quiet, unobtrusive services, and richly deserves the thanks of the public.

The work is a simple statement of facts upon a few subjects, upon which information is not readily attained by the reading public. The Hong merchants — their origin, history, position, and purpose; the manner of conducting trade through them; the articles of traffic, and the circumstances which affect prices; the former restrictions, and their modification by recent events in China; the advantages gained by Great

* Those who wish to pursue the subject further, are referred to Grosier's General Description of China; Macartney's Embassy to China, by Sir George Staunton; Travels in China, by John Barrow; Malte Brun's Universal Geography; Report of the Anglo-Chinese College, Malacca, 1829; Companion to the Anglo-Chinese Kalendar, 1832; Chinese Repository, vol. i. and Davis's Chinese.

Britain, from her "cruel and oppressive war;" the history, nature, and present management of the opium trade; and the probable result of the mission of Mr. Cushing; forming in all a catalogue of subjects, to which justice cannot be done here without more copious extracts than our limits will allow. It is extremely difficult to make quotations from a work of this nature. All the facts are valuable, and it would be necessary to give a sketch almost as long as the pamphlet itself, to include all that is worthy of notice. If we were to specify any part which should be read by all, and which embodies more information that is novel and interesting, it is that portion which relates to the *opium trade*.

It did not come within the objects of the work to enter upon any discussion of the moral and physical effects of the opium trade. Mr. Forbes, like every other well-wisher to his race, condemns the traffic, as alike wicked and impolitic. His object was to state the facts in the case, and to leave to others the natural inferences to be drawn.

"It is, no doubt, fresh in the recollection of most of our readers, that the 'superintendent of trade,' Captain Elliot, on the 27th of March, 1839, issued a public notice, calling on all the merchants engaged in the opium trade, to surrender to him, for the service of Her Majesty, all the opium under their control, in the waters of China, and to forward to him immediately, a sealed list of all the drug *within their control*; and in default of their doing so, by six o'clock of that day, he declared Her Majesty's government free from any liability, in respect to British-owned opium. Under this notice, all the opium which was then at and about Lintin, and the other outer anchorages, as well as all that which was supposed to remain unsold, on board of vessels on the Coast of China, was surrendered to Captain Elliot, and he in turn declared to the Imperial Commissioner, Lin, that he would immediately give orders to hand over to him, at the Bocca Tigris, twenty thousand two hundred and eighty-three chests of the drug—valued at that time, by the holders, at over £2,400,000 sterling,—but for which the British government has only paid about half that sum, leaving out interest for three years, altogether. When Captain Elliot warned the British merchants who were engaged in the opium trade, within the Bocca Tigris, that they must remove outside with their small craft, the press called on him, in no measured terms, to show the authority whereby he assumed the duties of protecting the revenue of China. He was loudly denounced, by many of his countrymen, for interfe-

ring with their business, —but when he called on them to surrender to him, on account of Her Majesty, more than twenty thousand chests of opium, much of which was far out of the reach of the Chinese, they did not ask for his authority — they were perfectly satisfied, under the circumstances, to surrender their drug, and consider the Queen as their debtor. By this process they got rid of one half of the year's crop of opium —most of which belonged to merchants in India — at what they deemed a fair price, and they, no doubt, looked forward to the sale of the balance of the crop, then in India and on its way, at a much better price than it could have been sold in a market overstocked by an inordinately large crop, estimated at over forty thousand chests. It is well known to all those familiar with the China trade in 1840, that these expectations were fully realized; for the trade flourished, and large sums were made by those who could afford to carry on the traffic in armed vessels, in despite of the Chinese cruisers. During this period, and for a year or two before and after the trade assumed all the characteristics of a *bonâ fide* smuggling trade, the Chinese were more vigilant and the foreigners more daring. The trade was carried on, during the period named, we believe, entirely by the British — the Americans having retired from it as soon as they found it for their interests to do so, fearing that it would embarrass their regular business, and knowing that they would be within the power of the local authorities of Canton, while the British were out of their reach, at Macao and at Hong Kong." — pp. 49, 50.

To afford some indication of the resources of the country, it may be mentioned, that the amount derived from direct and indirect taxes, in 1812, was about \$46,000,000. Each province is assessed a fixed sum which has not been changed for years, and which is again distributed among the different classes, in their just proportions. The divisions are as intricate, and the law and its provisions are as minutely enforced, as in the case of the census, and the numeration of the lands. The gross amount of revenue collected in all the provinces cannot be ascertained; the cost of collection is very great, and there are at present no means of increasing the amount which reaches Pe-king. For several years, the revenue fell short of the expenses of government, and no plan could be devised, by which they should be permanently increased. Public opinion in China, settled on all points, could not comprehend the propriety of a direct tax in any form, and

a despotic power could not levy taxes, which would have been practicable in a representative form of government. Be the wealth of the country, however, greater or less, attention to the following paragraph may place some proper limits to our commerce: —

“There can be no doubt that the opening of new places of trade will enable us to get rid of a larger quantity of domestic goods; but we must reiterate the opinion expressed in the early part of the last year, in a letter published in the *Daily Advertiser*, that the prospective extension of the China trade, in consequence of the opening of four new ports, is very much overestimated. It appears to us, that we must materially increase the consumption of tea and silks in this country, before we can expect to enlarge materially our trade to China; and the same remark applies to Great Britain. After we have paid for ten or twelve million pounds of tea, and a few hundred thousand dollars’ worth of silks, matting, cassia, &c., by giving in exchange our domestics, lead, &c., there must be an end of profitable trade with China. At present, owing to the demand for home consumption, and the consequent high price of cotton goods, we cannot expect successfully to compete with British goods in the markets of China. So with England; after she has paid for her thirty-six to forty million pounds of tea, and what little raw silk she requires from China, by exchanging her cottons, woollens, &c., there also is an end of profitable trade to her. We can neither of us afford to bring away bullion, or to return with bills in our pockets. Therefore it is clear, that we can only sell in China, profitably, just as many goods as will pay for the articles of export from China, which we respectively want. All the spare cash to be had in China, is needed to pay for the opium grown under the auspices of the government of Great Britain, and under the immediate superintendence of the servants of the Honorable East India Company. Could the opium trade be abolished, there is no doubt that a compensation would be found in the increased sale of manufactured goods, because there would be more ready cash, and more industry in the country to pay for them.” — pp. 55, 56.

One other quotation, upon the multifarious duties of the linguist, one of the most important conduits of trade, must close our extracts from the work.

“It may be imagined, from the name, that this individual was learned in the languages, but this was not a necessary qualification. His *duties according to law*, were to examine and report

on all goods coming and going; he was a runner between the foreign merchant, the Hong merchant, and the Hoppo's office; a public servant and slave to all these — and his character in general corresponded well with his onerous task. He was the sub-scapegoat of the three contending interests named. If the duties were too largely assessed, the foreign merchant blamed him; if they were too small, and insufficient to satisfy the rapacity of the Hoppo and his myrmidons, he fell into bad odor there; and if any thing went wrong at the Hoppo's office, or at the foreign merchants', the Hong merchant, being responsible, put as much of the burden on the 'lingos' as he could throw off his own shoulders; the consequence of these contending interests and liabilities made the linguists, by necessity, the greatest rogues in the empire. They were always ready, for a consideration, to do the bidding of their master for the moment, and having three most exacting masters, they had a hard time of it. If they could not make out a crape shawl to be a handkerchief, or a piece of goods, containing eighty yards to have only forty, or resolve any other impossible quantity into a totally different description of goods, they were considered entirely unfit for their places; they were never expected to speak the truth on any subject, and one would as soon quote the opinion of the Father of Lies, as that of a 'lingo.' — p. 17.

III. THE PROSPECT OF A TREATY.

We come now to the laws of China, relative to the reception of foreign embassies, which are very minute in their requisitions, and which will probably decide the fate of our own effort to open relations with the Court of Peking. We can hardly hope to be more successful than the embassies which have preceded ours. A short sketch of the official intercourse between the government of China and foreign nations may afford some solace to our wounded pride, if our ambassador should return without having succeeded in the objects of his voyage. Each mission, in turn, except the Dutch, has flattered itself that an exception to the ceremonial regulations would be made in its favor, and all have been equally disappointed at the uniformly unsuccessful result of their diplomacy.

The earliest embassies sent to China, are mentioned in the Chinese Annals, and have escaped the notice of the Greek and Roman historians. We have account of five embassies from the West; the first, from An-tun, or Antoninus (Mar-

cus Aurelius,) and the last, in the year 1371, from Matthew Cantacuzene. It is worthy of observation, that one of the emperors is called Kai-sa, or Cæsar. The Chinese have not always been the secluded, uncommunicative nation which they now are. The spirit of separation and non-intercourse owes its origin to the Tartar dynasty.

Of the European nations, Portugal, Holland, Russia, and England, have each, at different times, sent ambassadors for the purpose of opening a commercial intercourse, and of securing a safe and honorable footing in China. The Portuguese were the first to perceive the advantages of the trade, and despatched a mission as early as the year 1521. They have since sent three ambassadors, the last in the year 1753. The possession of Macao, conceded to them by the Chinese government, in the hands of France or England, would have proved an important entering wedge for further advantages, but the narrow, vacillating, and cowardly spirit of the Portuguese has failed to make it a place of consequence, and has unfortunately increased the contempt of the Chinese for Europeans, which only the recent exhibition of English power has removed.

The three Dutch embassies have submitted, in all its detail, to the humiliating requisitions of court etiquette; and, notwithstanding their obsequiousness, have failed in obtaining any important result. In performing the ceremonials required from *tributary* states, they acknowledged the inferiority of their government, and consequently had no right to demand the favor of trade upon an equal footing.

The Russian and English embassies have invariably refused the performance of these ceremonies. Russia, with commendable perseverance, has sent no less than eight ambassadors for commercial purposes, which have been as unsuccessful as the two English embassies of Lord Macartney and Lord Amherst, so well known to the reading public. It is needless to recount the various steps, and the vexatious delays, of these two gentlemen. The reasons given for the want of success of Lord Macartney, were, briefly: because he did not carry presents for the ministers of state, and for the son of the emperor; because he neglected the customs of the country, in the salute of the emperor; because all the persons in the embassy presented themselves in too simple and

too ordinary dresses; because the ambassador was not careful to make presents to the different officers of state; because his demands were not written in the tone and style of the country. All these reasons reduce themselves simply to a refusal to comply with the code from which we shall shortly give an extract.

The Chinese consider all embassies as *tributary* in their nature. Indeed, any other object than the bearing of tribute does not enter their sphere of possibility, so perfectly well satisfied are they of their own invincible supremacy; and consequently no provision is made in their unalterable ceremonial for the reception of any mission on equal terms. It must be admitted under the law of ceremony which already exists, or not at all. On either hand of the dilemma, the embassy is sure to fail. If it does not comply with the requisitions of court etiquette, it fails, because it does not obey the law; if it attends most rigorously to the minutest ceremonies, it cannot succeed, because it has admitted the inferiority of its own government to the Court of Pe-king, and cannot, of course, demand any favors.

We come now to the law itself. After going through, by way of practice, certain prostrations and minute and troublesome ceremonies in the presence of one of the masters of ceremonies attached to the Board of Rites,* and after the presentation of credentials, which is also attended by the same perplexing and unpalatable routine of performance, the ambassador, at last, is admitted to a solemn audience of the emperor.

“The ceremony of the presentation of credentials by the tributary ambassador having been finished, he is conducted reverentially into the great court of the palace. The emperor, clothed in his ordinary court suit, descends into the great hall of

* There are six Supreme Boards, which serve to connect the supreme head with the subordinate branches of the administration, and have cognizance of all that appertains to the civil service in the eighteen provinces. They are, (1) the Board of Civil Office; (2) the Board of Revenue; (3) the Board of Rites; (4) the Board of War; (5) the Board of Punishment; and (6) the Board of Works. The duties of the Board referred to in the text are, to attend to whatever appertains to the ordinances for regulating precedence and literary distinctions; to the canons for maintaining religious honor and fidelity; to the orders respecting intercourse and tribute; and to the forms of giving banquets, and granting bounties. Eight volumes of the Collected Statutes are filled with the details of the duties of this Board. *Bridgman's Chinese Chrestomathy*, pp. 576–578. *Chinese Repository*, vol. iv. p. 139.

audience of supreme concord, where all the ministers and great functionaries of the state are assembled, to perform the prescribed ceremonies. These ceremonies completed, the officers in charge of foreign guests will introduce the tributary ambassador, with all the officers of his suite. Advancing from the west of the vestibule of vermilion, the functions of the officers in charge of foreign guests cease. Notice is given to the heralds of the palace, who present themselves, and go through the prescribed ceremonial. They proclaim, 'The favor of the emperor permits you to be seated! the favor of the emperor grants you *tea*.' If it is then convenient, and if it is not a periodical or annual reception at court, the Board of Rites deliberates, and settles the day of the official presentation. This is communicated to the emperor, who is entreated to be willing to grant this audience. The grand marshal of the imperial palace makes all the preparations for the ceremony, by giving the necessary orders, and drills the *tributary* ambassador, with his interpreters, in the proper manner of executing the prescribed ceremonial.

"The day of audience having arrived, the tributary ambassador, agreeably to previous arrangement, clothed in the official or public dress of his country, and the interpreters, in their 'supplementary' dress, present themselves on the outside of the gate of the palace, where they wait respectfully until some one introduces them.

"The emperor, dressed in his ordinary suit, enters the hall of audience, where are assembled, by command, the grand officers of the palace, and the imperial guard, who are ranged standing on the right and left, according to habitual usage. One of the presidents of the Board of Rites, dressed in his extraordinary court suit of embroidered dragons, enters, conducting the tributary ambassador. The interpreters follow. Coming to the west of the vestibule of vermilion, they perform the ceremony of the three kneelings, and of the nine prostrations. This ceremony being finished, they conduct the ambassador toward the hall of audience, causing him to mount the steps by the western side. Arrived at the exterior of the door of the hall, or of the pavilion of the throne, he kneels. The emperor then deigns to make known his august will, and interrogates the ambassador with benevolent and gracious words. The president of the Board of Rites receives the questions and repeats them; the interpreters translate and explain them to the tributary ambassador. The tributary ambassador answers; the interpreters translate his words; the president of the Board of Rites repeats them to the emperor. This ceremony finished, they rise; and the ambassador is directed to descend on the western side. Having

gone down, they reconduct him (to the gate) ; and, if he wishes to remain, they entertain him with spectacles. Thus end the ceremonies of this day."

At the next interview, the ambassador is admitted into the hall of audience. The emperor is then surrounded by all the great dignitaries of his empire, and regards with complacency the kneelings and prostrations, which are repeated by the ambassador four or five times. During this interview, the emperor asks questions as before. This is the result of the second interview.

After some few days of repose, the tributary ambassador is invited to a third presentation, to take leave, and to thank the emperor for the favors which he has received. After going through the three kneelings and nine prostrations, he concludes "the solemn audience of the emperor," having accomplished nothing of the objects of his embassy. The ceremonial of offering the presents which he has brought the emperor takes place before the last interview, and is attended with pretty nearly the same ceremonies.

On this point, we will add the opinion of M. Abel-Rémusat, one of the profoundest Chinese scholars of our generation, whose works are an authority upon all Chinese subjects to which they relate. He says:—

"It is a mistake which has already occurred, and may easily happen again, to regard an embassy to Pe-king as a means of obtaining something from the Chinese government, of concluding a treaty of commerce, or of transacting any particular business ; for the invariable customs, and even the laws, are opposed to such a result. An ambassador, going to court, is considered merely as an envoy commissioned to offer to 'the son of heaven' the homage of his master, and to bring tribute from him. The duration of his visit, the number of audiences which he can obtain, the officers to whom he must address himself, are all determined by regulations which he cannot evade ; he cannot pass beyond the limits assigned to him, nor speak of business to the emperor or his ministers. Such is the ancient usage, to which the Chinese remain inviolably attached. Those ambassadors, who have hoped that an exception might be made in their favor, have little known the spirit of the Chinese nation, its subjection to ancient customs, and, above all, its pride,

interested in the maintenance of every thing which seems to attest the preëminence it affects in regard to all other nations."

It is hardly possible, that the character of the whole people should be so completely changed by the results of the last few years as to place the court of Pe-king upon the same platform with civilized powers. The humiliating lesson taught by the arms of England, affects only the parts of the country liable to be visited by foreigners. Commercial acuteness, in addition to this strenuous proof of the civilization of other nations, has impressed upon the governors of certain provinces the policy of a change of their commercial relations; and, through their strong representation, the Imperial Court has been prevailed upon to relax the strictness of the coast regulations. No personal contact with the "barbarians," however, has humbled the pride of the emperor, and no approach of a hostile army has terrified the court of Pe-king into a rational and civilized communication with foreigners. The heart of the country, and the general spirit of its institutions, are still unchanged, and the result of the American embassy to China is, we fear, not very problematical. We do not pretend to say, that no good will be derived from it. The arrival of an American squadron, conveying an ambassador from the distant United States of America, will extend the knowledge of our country, and procure respect for our power. It will strengthen the amicable position of our merchants. It will extend our own information, upon the commercial resources of China, and the prospects of advantageous trade.

We understand, that Mr. Cushing has begun his labors by the study of the Manchou language, intending to employ that copious and expressive vocabulary, instead of Chinese, in his communication with the Court. The sovereign of China, and many of the high officers of state, are Manchous. To each of the six supreme Boards previously mentioned, there is a Manchou as well as a Chinese President. It seems to our Envoy, that a knowledge of the language of the Manchous, the present rulers of China, will, to say the least, be politic, besides affording a less figurative and simpler language for intercourse. If the acquisition of their language, for the first time, by a foreign ambassador, in addition to the employment of the usual methods, should not produce the

desired result of a favorable reception at Pe-king, it may safely be asserted, that all honorable means have been used. We heartily hope that he may be successful.

All that talent and perseverance can effect in attempting to change the settled laws of the country in favor of the United States, will be done by Mr. Cushing. If his utmost efforts end in disappointment, it will be no reflection upon his skill or his fidelity; and if he should succeed, he will have the proud satisfaction of being the first foreigner, who has treated with the "son of heaven" upon equal terms, and secured for his own country an honorable footing in China.

W. W. G.

PETER S. DU PONCEAU, LL. D.

SINCE the publication of the last number of our Journal, the Society has been called to lament the death of its distinguished associate, MR. DU PONCEAU. The loss is deeply felt by the Society, and by the country at large. The following obituary notice of this eminent man has been prepared from two others drawn up by a member of the Society who had been intimately acquainted with him for many years, and which were published in two of the journals of the city, at the time of his death, which took place April 1st, 1844.

THE painful intelligence of the death of this eminent man has just reached us; and, with those few surviving individuals who had enjoyed a long personal intercourse with him, it has caused a sensation, which is the more keenly felt, as his illness (bronchitis) had not, until the last two or three days, assumed a character which gave his friends occasion for alarm. He expired on the morning of the first of this month, having nearly completed the eighty-fourth year of his age, and having closed a long and honorable life, through which his eminent talents and virtues had enabled him to render lasting services to society, and especially to his adopted country.

Mr. Du Ponceau was born on the third day of June, 1760,